



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, June 12, 2019

Day 12

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

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New Democrat: 24

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 12, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading Bill 8 Education Amendment Act, 2019

Mr. Bilous moved on behalf of Ms Sigurdson that the motion for second reading of Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that further time is necessary to enable school boards to adjust their policies to comply with the proposed legislation and regulations.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment June 11: Mr. Bilous]

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are on amendment RA1. Is there anyone wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll just ask at the start. I'm not sure how much time I have left.

The Speaker: Four minutes.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 8. I believe that I left off moving a reasoned amendment to give school boards a little bit more time to adjust to what this bill is proposing. I highlighted earlier some of my concerns with Bill 8 and how it's currently written. One of the big concerns that I have – and there are a few – is the fact that this bill gives school boards the ability to essentially vote off or out one of their elected school board trustee colleagues. Now, that causes the alarm bells to go off, Mr. Speaker. School board trustees are duly elected, as is every member in this Assembly, and to give the authority to the other school board trustees to remove one from the board, quite frankly, is going to not only stifle innovation and robust democratic debate; it's going to stifle ideas, it's going to promote groupthink, it will ensure that members of a school board all think alike, and if anyone steps out of line, well, be careful. You could end up without a job.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that school board trustees are elected to serve the people that they represent, similar to all 87 members in this Chamber. As soon as you give the authority to the other members of the board, the majority of the board, to vote off a trustee when they may disagree with the person's opinion, they may tell them – if they're raising too many questions, maybe if they go to the public to disagree with a decision that the board has made, well, the board can then remove them.

I think of a number of school trustees who have spoken out with what they believed was right when the will of the rest of the board was incorrect. I can think of a couple of trustees that would have been voted off or out by the board. They have a responsibility to the people that elected them, not a responsibility to toe the line of the rest of the trustees, Mr. Speaker. This is a very dangerous precedent and quite shocking that the government has this in their Bill 8, the current Education Amendment Act, 2019.

Of course, other concerns that myself and my colleagues have raised are how much this weakens provisions to protect students when it comes to the LGBTQ2-plus community. I think that throughout the course of the day we've heard the government say that these are the strongest protections. There's nothing that could be further from reality, Mr. Speaker. We see in black and white what this bill is proposing compared to other jurisdictions that have much stronger protections, including here in Alberta under our government. These changes are actually going to remove protections for students, expose our young people again to bullying and being treated differently because of their sexual orientation. You know, to talk about how this is going to create more inclusive spaces, I don't think any Albertan is buying what this bill is trying to sell, quite frankly.

For that reason, I will encourage all members of this Assembly to support this reasoned amendment and ship this bill off.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Does anybody have any questions or comments for the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview?

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to speak to the amendment? I see the hon. the Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this reasoned amendment in regard to Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, 2019. You know, I was quite surprised that the government did go forward with this Education Act. We know that it was created quite a number of years ago by the former Conservative government and was never proclaimed. The consensus among school boards and people that worked on it and, I think, members of that Conservative government was that the Education Act as it stood was not ready for prime time. It had a number of controversial elements to it that were very difficult both to pay for, to accommodate for, and, as the previous speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview just pointed out, it had some basic undemocratic elements to it that just made it so that it was not to be proclaimed.

When our government was in office, what we did do was a very practical thing and take some elements of the Education Act that were practical, reasonable ideas and incorporated them into legislation rather than taking this whole big chunk of legislation that, quite frankly, by that time was starting to, you know, show its age. Mr. Speaker, then, instead, we just took some practical elements of it and had a bill that, I think, was quite successful.

Now analyzing what has led us to this moment, Mr. Speaker, I think is that the government during their election was looking for a way to move backwards on GSA legislation and was looking for a way to do that that could provide some cover – right? – instead of just having, you know, an act to reverse GSA policy, which so brazenly sort of goes against, I think, both popular opinion and what's right, what's correct, the right thing to do, using the Education Act as some cover. So here we are today. I know that the hon. minister has taken out some of the other elements in Bill 8 that otherwise cost money and were a problem and so forth, so here it lays even more bare this sort of rebirth of the Education Act in a Frankensteinian sort of way. It is even more clearly and brazenly just an act to get at the GSA legislation.

I think most people can see through it. If they haven't, they are seeing clear as day now. You know, it's a problem, quite frankly. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, from being witness to the evolution of protections for gay-straight alliances and queer-straight alliances from the debates that took place around what was Bill 10 from the

government as well that this was a very divisive and difficult process.

What I saw when I became Minister of Education is that Bill 10 was fraught with peril, quite frankly. It had lots of loopholes in it that either by design or by omission allowed schools and school boards to not act in an expedient and prompt sort of way when students wanted to form a gay-straight alliance or a queer-straight alliance and thus could just kind of rag the puck and maybe wait for that group of kids to leave the school and then try to forget about it, right? So obfuscation was very common. I had lots of people from around the province coming to me with stories about how they just couldn't get the principal and the school board to act.

Then, you know, it was kind of hoping that it would die on the vine, this notion of having a GSA in a school, so we knew that we had to make some law about that to say that when students would ask to form a GSA or QSA, a principal would act in an expedient way, as soon as possible, to help to expedite that request and to provide a responsible teacher to be supervising this and to make sure that the kids could call it a GSA or a QSA if they chose to do so, okay?

7:40

I mean, these were all rules and advancements and sort of reforms that we put into what was Bill 24 because we actually saw people using and displaying these behaviours in the field, in our schools, around the province. It was the same with protecting the confidentiality of students who were joining a GSA or a QSA, that if they chose to have that confidence to respect that, right? Again, we had to make that rule because schools were putting out newsletters and so forth here and there in and around the province. You know, the whole basis of a GSA or a QSA is that it provides a safe haven for very vulnerable students, so any notion that a teacher or an administrator could put out the names of the people joining a GSA or a QSA, again, was defying or eroding the very reason for a GSA or a QSA to exist.

That's it. I mean, those are all the things that we basically did in Bill 24 to strengthen GSAs and to make a safe place for kids in schools around the province. You know, I must say that it wasn't an easy thing to accomplish, but over the last couple of years we did see all public school boards in the province put up safe and caring policies that were not just adhering to the law but were exceeding and were very inspired, I think, in regard to protecting GSAs and QSAs.

Every Catholic school board put up policies, again, that were safe and caring and met the requirements of the regulation and exceeded it and, you know, kept the integrity of faith in all of those Catholic school policies as well – right? – of course, respecting that faith-based schools can have those things infused into their regulation and into their policy and into their teaching. The Catholic school boards came up with that and made it very well with flying colours. They did great, and I was very proud of that.

All of the charter schools in the province of Alberta, again, came up with very salient and often quite moving safe and caring policies that were in line with the policy of the province and were, you know, adhering to the spirit and the intention of a safe and caring environment for all students.

All of the francophone schools: same thing. They all came up with policies that were in keeping with the law. I had to presume that they did because I don't read French, but I was told that their policies were excellent, always. I'm very proud of the work that they did.

The vast majority of private schools did as well write policies that were in keeping with the spirit of what their private school was

intending to do, and if they were a faith-based one, they had the infusion of faith into their safe and caring policies and did a great, great job.

I'm telling you this, Mr. Speaker, because this is an indicator of just how far we came here in the province of Alberta in regard to school boards embracing the notion of the utility and the absolute necessity of GSAs to be protected in the way that we had outlined here in the province of Alberta, not just, you know, reluctantly following the law but embracing those ideas and, quite frankly, not just teaching students but also teachers and parents and all of us about the importance of creating a safe and caring place for all people regardless of their sexuality. You can move that further to their ethnicity, their gender, their geographic location, their socioeconomic condition, right? This was all part of what I would suggest is a movement to a greater understanding about each other as people.

I could see it and I'm sure you could see it, too, in your places. I can tell you that some of the most flourishing and, I guess, enthusiastic GSAs I saw were in, you know, places that you might not expect. You know very well, Mr. Speaker, the awesome GSA that is in Olds high school, for example, right? I went there. It was absolutely one of the best attended ones that I've seen, and it embraced this larger sort of social justice issue and learning about other issues as well and had reached out into the community as well. I think that when I went to that GSA meeting, there must have been at least 30-some people there, including teachers, the principal – I think there might have been a town councillor there – lots of kids, and really moving stories about this safe place for kids to talk about whatever, right?

You know, it's a place where people planned – like, they're raising money to send to a developing country, I believe, and were advocating for greater mental health supports for kids and stuff like that. It was just a really great GSA: organic, student-led, and something that I think everybody in the school and then, in affiliation with the college, the whole town could be proud of.

Here we are moving along on a very progressive track that, I think, gets the head nod from people right across the province, and I would go as far as to call it something of a sea change – right? – where suddenly it's like you build up this sort of accumulation of information plus understanding plus things happening and suddenly you had a collective head nod from Albertans, saying: "Yeah. You know what? LGBTQ-plus students and people in general are just citizens of this province and deserve the same respect and understanding." Not just tolerance but acceptance, Mr. Speaker, acceptance and inclusion. This happens over time. It's not easy, but – just think about it – we really did come a long way here in the province of Alberta. I'm not going to begin to say it was just because of the GSAs, but it's an indicator. It's like a litmus test. It's a test of the composition, of the chemistry of who we are.

People might say, "Whoa; you know, what's the big deal here with the Education Amendment Act?" and so forth. Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? It's going backwards. People know it. People who understand this situation know that this is regressive. I mean, I think it's up to the government to explain why they are choosing to do so. I'm not going to put words in other people's mouths, but here it is: you can only judge a person or a government or a bill based on what it intends to do, and here it is moving backwards on a lot of progress that we did do and have done and will continue to do despite road bumps like Bill 8, right? Some people are calling it Bill Hate, which I don't disagree with because it sends an underlying message that destroying or undermining or eroding the progress that we've made around GSAs is, quite frankly, unconscionable, and I won't stand for it. If you want to try and do this, I mean, I would say that it is at your own peril.

I know that there are lots of splits of opinion amongst people around how and why we should do such risky legislation as this and what the implications are. Well, I can tell you, as a cautionary tale, that it divides people. You can spin it all you want around saying: oh, well, you know, it's just the same as the one before. Well, why are you doing this, then? If it's just the same as it was before, why make those changes, Mr. Speaker? I think that the answer is obvious.

I don't think that it's good legislation. I don't think it's good, responsible use of power here in this House. Quite frankly, I mean, who am I to give advice to the government? But I'll do it anyway. You will lose from this. You will lose support, you will lose moral authority, and you will lose literally hundreds of thousands of young people, especially, who really think that something like this is regressive and a step backwards to building a modern, more just, inclusive, and accepting society, that they want to live in. You know, take that advice for what it is, and I would be happy to give you more.

7:50

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung rising on 29(2)(a). No, I don't see him. Interesting.

Is there anyone else wishing to speak to the amendment? Now I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung rising to speak to the amendment.

Mr. Dach: That's right, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much. That's what I did want to speak to, the reasoned amendment that is before us now, an amendment that would allow school boards to do things that, frankly, I think are abhorrent, in particular, the measures which would allow school boards to fire an elected official, an elected trustee from amongst their numbers.

I really question the motivation behind this legislation. As well, I know that the former Minister of Education the Member for Edmonton-North West, the newly named riding of Edmonton-North West, spoke just recently about the risks the government was taking and told the government members that they could enact this legislation at their own political peril. Yet the government seems intent to go ahead, notwithstanding that inherent risk, and damn the torpedoes. I'm wondering aloud to myself and to this Chamber why exactly the government is so motivated to go ahead with measures such as this.

[Mr. Loewen in the chair]

Once again, it seems to be something that's on the Premier's list of pet peeves and something he wishes to accomplish in an effort to minimize any possible threat of opposition to his authority. It's another means and another way, another example of the Premier getting other people to do his dirty work. I think that that will be forthcoming in the future when we see, if indeed this measure is passed, that school boards who are actually looking to get rid of a member from amongst themselves are doing so in a manner that reflects the desire, the ideology, the wishes of this particular Premier. It's a rather insidious way of getting the central power's fingers into the workings of lower level political bodies such as school boards. I don't think I'm being overly concerned about it. I think it's something that's evident to me. I think the proof will be in the pudding.

Firing an elected school board trustee from amongst a body of trustees is a pretty serious measure, as was mentioned before in this House, Mr. Speaker. If indeed that was something that this body, this Chamber, this Legislature, was enabled to do, there would be

an outrage. By the same token, there should be outrage in considering that the government wants to invoke this measure in the province of Alberta, to allow such a thing to take place, where an elected member of a school board can be trounced out of office simply by a vote of the members of that same school board. Those individuals were elected to serve their constituents, and it should not be a vote of the body that they belong to that forces them off that school board. It's a very, very concerning and dangerous political precedent, and I think it's a threat to local democracy and thereby the whole democracy that we espouse in this province.

If school boards are on the hit list, what next? Where else will we expect the insidious central power to invade? This body, this Chamber? Will we see legislation next where the government wants to take aim at any member of the Legislature, perhaps, that they don't particularly like and would like to take measures to force out of office? I think that that's not beyond comprehension here in this Legislature. This government is capable of any type of attack on democracy, and I'm not surprised that this measure has come forward; I'm certainly disappointed.

Once again, we've seen in the past, previous to the election of this government, while they were having legacy parties get together, that before he was Premier, when he was attempting to gain leadership of the legacy parties, he revelled in getting other people to do his dirty work. This is an extension of that same theme here in the Legislature, and it's applied now to school boards. I think that I honestly have a right to wonder what's next. It wouldn't surprise me to see the members opposite bring forward legislation to enable them to attack and rid themselves of members of this Legislature who they feel are mounting opposition to them and represent a political threat to them. It's a concern. I raise that red flag and hope that other members opposite as well as our own caucus recognize this as well.

In other matters, though, the other side of the coin is the issue of the GSAs. Really, this legislation is an effort to destroy the gay-straight alliances, as has been mentioned by many members of this House, and this reasoned amendment, Mr. Speaker, is something that would allow school boards time to catch their breath and react properly to the measures that the government proposes. There are a lot of changes inherent in what these proposals are, and school boards, I think, should be given the opportunity, at the very least, to mount a defence, mount arguments, perhaps, to persuade the government that this is really not a direction that they should be going in.

I don't think it would take, you know, a year, but I'm wondering if the amount of time that is asked for in the reasoned amendment is enough. I'm certain that members of the various school boards throughout the province are already freaking out and wondering just what the heck is going on with this particular government. Three and a half weeks into a mandate, and they're, first of all, putting children's lives at risk and, secondly, looking at allowing the democratic process to be perverted by enabling school boards to get rid of duly elected members: a pretty roughshod piece of legislation that's been proposed. This amendment is, I think, a reasonable measure designed to basically tell the government: "Whoa. Take a breath and realize what you're doing. This is pretty dangerous stuff."

I echo the words of the Member for Edmonton-North West when he cautioned the government about the political risk they take in implementing these measures. There's a very, very large chance that this will be the government's Bill 6 right here. This is your Achilles tendon, and you're offering it up, so thank you very much. Go ahead, but the reality is that in the process you're damaging kids. It's incumbent upon us as members of the opposition not to goad you on to go ahead and jump over the cliff with this; it's to put a

stop to it if at all possible, using every means that we have to protect the children of this province and protect the democratic rights of elected members of school boards in this province. We're going to exercise that responsibility at every turn.

That's what we're doing here tonight by making sure that we voice on behalf of our constituents who respect democracy, who really don't want to be attending the funerals of children who were outed by members of the teaching profession, as they'll be enabled to do by legislation this government wants to enact – those things are some things we are going to do our very best to halt by at least giving the school boards an opportunity to make representations seriously to the government to seriously do a double take on what they're talking about doing and perhaps even put a full stop to it with respect to the GSAs as well as the ability to allow school boards to fire duly elected officials.

I fully support this amendment, and I expect that members on this side of the House will do so as well. I know that there are other members of our caucus who wish to express themselves and let their constituents know how strongly they feel and how strongly they carry forward their views that these are very damaging pieces of legislation and measures that are contained in this legislation, dangerous measures, that will actually cost children's lives, cost students' lives.

The proof is in the pudding as far as the GSAs are concerned. We know they save lives. Eliminating them, restricting them, making them ineffective will cost lives. That is not something that is to be taken lightly. As members of the Legislature, as a government, as a responsibility you have, number one, to protect life and limb. When a government goes ahead and actually enacts legislation, proposes legislation that will do the opposite, it's unfathomable. It's irresponsible. It's unconscionable.

8:00

Yet here in Alberta in 2019 we have a government that is saying: look, ideologically we're opposed to the concept of people having rights as members of the LGBTQ community. We wish to go back to 50 years ago, perhaps, even to when I went to high school, when those who were identified as members of the LGBTQ community were beaten up, seriously beaten up, and nearly killed. In every high school in this city and around the province identifying yourself as a member of the gay community was an invitation to be abused – and seriously abused – and that's the type of thing that we're going to end up going back to. We're inviting that type of abuse of our members of the LGBTQ-plus community by enabling legislation that allows students to be outed and basically creating an open season for those who are not in favour of the LGBTQ2S-plus community having similar human rights to all the rest of us.

Although the members opposite pay lip service to how they believe they're supporting the LGBTQ community and that they have legislation and measures that are just as strong as they ever were and that there's nothing to worry about here, folks, that's not the case. We had many, many letters – read into the record earlier in this session by the Member for St. Albert – whose strength goes beyond anything I could ever say on the issue regarding what they felt as a result of this government's measures to weaken and cut the legs out from under the GSAs that right now students in this province enjoy. The government should take heed, not of me but of every student that wrote those heartfelt letters. They were direct. They were very powerful. They were challenging to this government. They were real. They were scared. They were angry. Those letters from those students who are in the crosshairs of this government should be something that is taken very, very seriously and not just swatted aside with indifference.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I risked being called out of order, I think, today when I asked if members of the government opposite would attend the funerals of those individuals who lost their lives or took their own lives as a result of changes to legislation that this government is making. In the past, without the GSAs, children lost their lives. They took their own lives. They ended up on the street. Now taking away this protection that has saved lives is going to do the opposite. It will end up with children being dead, and I don't know if members opposite would be welcome at those funerals. I certainly would want to make sure that the public knows about every one of those individuals who end up dead as a result of not being valued, not being allowed to protect their identity until such time as they are able to properly bring forward their desire to come out to their parents at the time of their choosing and in a way that they felt would allow the family unit to be kept intact.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there may be others on this side of the House who wish to express themselves, because it is a deeply, deeply concerning measure that the government is bringing forward. At the very least, school boards should be given the opportunity to step on the brakes to this piece of legislation. The population of the province should be given an opportunity to have a dialogue with school boards, and the school boards should have an opportunity to consult their own constituents and bring their fears and concerns to the parents of the students they represent and to the students also who are attending those schools, saying: "Look, this is what's happening. This is what the government is wanting us to do. Please, for crying out loud, let us know what you're thinking, and let's get onto it."

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment to the member. Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate very much the Member for Edmonton-McClung's comments on this. We were both in here last night as well, and we both spoke to the bill then as well. Just on the amendment here, I wanted to let folks in this Chamber know that this certainly is a personal issue for me.

I wanted to just piggyback a little bit on what the Member for Edmonton-North West noted. He noted a few things that were really, really important and worth repeating. He said to members opposite: you know, who am I to tell you what to do? Well, I can tell you that as the former Education minister that member did so much work. He was able to take a very collaborative approach to get a number of schools onside, to have those deep conversations to explain just why GSAs, QSAs are so darn important, just why they do save lives. He was very successful. He's certainly being modest, but he was so successful in that role in really moving the conversation forward.

We've come a long way when it comes to LGBTQ2S rights. We've come a long way in advancing acceptance – as he said, not tolerance but acceptance – in our schools. There's still, obviously, more to be done, and of course our fear is that Bill 8 will roll that back, which is why we're urging this government to reconsider and, in this case, to delay.

To talk a little bit more about that member's successes, I mean, there were 28 schools, only 28, out of hundreds and hundreds across the province that didn't create policies to support GSAs. Under our plan those schools would have lost funding at the end of May. As I talked about last night, I worry for those students in those schools currently because we know there are students in at least some of

those schools who are struggling with their identity as we speak. What's going to happen to those students? If this act were to be implemented for September 1, I worry about a whole lot of other students across the province in schools where they perhaps have conformed to our previous legislation but will now be able to revert to the government prior to ours.

I just want to maybe throw back to the Member for Edmonton-McClung. You know, I'm certain that he, like myself and others in this Chamber, has heard from a number of folks in the community. If you could just share a little bit more about what you've been hearing first-hand from your own constituents.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for the opportunity once again to speak to the concerns of my constituents in Edmonton-McClung. As I mentioned in the House before, many, many people who worked very closely with me in the lead-up to the last election were from the LGBTQ-plus community, because they know that they are supported by this caucus and have always been and will always be supported by this caucus. They have a home with us because they know that we value them as equal citizens no matter what we're looking at, whether it be school boards, whether it be in the Legislature, whether it be any order of human rights that one can think of.

These constituents of mine who happen to be members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community are very much a part of the fabric of the community. They're very beloved as members of my inner circle. They are also, I know, very integrated in other elements of the community, whether it be their community league, whether it be their faith group, whether it be the community efforts with youth. There are a host of efforts that people in the LGBTQ2S-plus community involve themselves in because they know the necessity, the value of community service and community effort, of getting together, of coalescing, of collaborating. That lesson, I guess, is one of necessity.

8:10

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is rising to debate.

Member Loyola: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I remember being in high school, and being in high school, I was one of those kinds of guys who just kind of fit into various different groups. You know, I was big enough to play football back at Holy Trinity high school. I was part of the offensive team. But on top of hanging out with all the jocks – we well know them by that name – I also hung out with the drama club because I was really big into drama as well. I remember hearing it all, the kinds of derogatory names that would be called to people who were from the LGBTQ community.

You know, I'm so thankful because my parents always taught me to respect everybody no matter what. It didn't matter what their sexual orientation was, where they were from, what ethnic or cultural background they were. My parents taught me that treating everybody as equals is probably the most important thing that we can do and, not only that, to understand that because of the discrimination that exists in society, not only should we not contribute to the discrimination but also do our best to give that individual a hand up or help them out in some kind of way.

When I see the bill before us, as has been well stated by many of my colleagues, this is actually trying to reverse what our government so diligently was trying to set up here in the province of Alberta. You know what's unfathomable about this, Mr.

Speaker? The fact that this was all about creating a safe space for people who are discriminated against, a place where, because they are going through and perhaps even suffering with issues before them in terms of their own orientation, they can go and talk to other people, a safe space where they can discuss what they're feeling – their ideas, what's happening to them – where they will have other students that they can talk to. That's what unfathomable about this. It was only trying to create a safe space. I have to ask you all: what does that say about our society and our community if it's absolutely essential for us to create these safe spaces for individuals who are questioning and wondering about their sexual orientation and don't feel safe in their communities?

As was well stated by the Member for Edmonton-McClung, I remember times where people were actually abused and having to stand up for people and say, "Hey, hey, you can't do that," all because of sexual orientation. Not that these individuals even knew. They just assumed. That's what happens, unfortunately, in our communities and in our schools. People just assume: "Oh, this person is a little bit different. So what's the thing that we should do because they're different? Well, let's beat up on them." What does that say about our society, our communities? Where was that learned? Not only where was it learned, but why does it continue to happen?

So here our government tried to create safe spaces inside of schools, where every child, every student has the right to feel safe, and now this government wants to turn back the clock on that. And I know. I get it. I've heard it so many times, members from the opposite side saying: oh, this will be – I can't even remember the wording that they used. I'll be honest with you. I tend to unplug because we don't believe it.

You can't convince us that what this bill is going to do is create a safe space for all of those students that desperately need it. Desperately need it. This abuse is going to continue in our schools if we don't do anything about it. The bullying is going to continue, all because people are assuming about someone's sexual orientation. For me, that's what's incredibly unfathomable about this. We all should be able to feel safe in our communities and especially in our schools.

This bill is going to remove the protections, and school staff will be allowed to out students participating in GSAs. Now, I don't even want to imagine what it's like to be in a situation where you're questioning your sexual orientation and you don't even feel safe enough to tell your own parents because you know that if you tell your own parents, one of the things that they could potentially do is even kick you out of the house.

We know that this continues to happen here in Alberta. There are people that are so closed minded when it comes to sexual orientation that they would even be willing to kick their own child out of their home. Now, that's up to them what they do. But I know that the members on this side of the House want to make sure that that individual is well taken care of and that that individual feels safe.

8:20

So now what does it say when a government bill is willing to strip this protection from an individual, when even a teacher could then go and say, "Hey, your child is participating in this group; you should be concerned," when that child is so scared to even tell their own parent about what they're feeling, what they're experiencing? What right does another individual have to actually do that to a child? To a child. We're supposed to be a society that is supposed to protect children, and here now the government is putting forward a bill that is actually going to remove that protection from a child, which could actually lead that individual to be kicked out of their

own home. They could be homeless. I just can't understand why the government would do that.

I think this is very important, and members on this side of the House have already said it. I think that we should be really concerned and that the members opposite should be really concerned, because there are many in Alberta who will not stand for this. They will make their voices heard. I know that there are members in my community, people that I represent in my own riding who have already been very vocal on this issue. I'm here to make sure that their voices are heard when it comes to this bill. I want to ask the members opposite to really think about what they're putting forward here and how they are affecting the lives of children, students here in our province of Alberta. Ultimately, we are supposed to make sure that they have a safe place to live, and they should feel safe in their own community.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I think I'll just leave it at that for right now. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone would like to make a brief question or comment with respect to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie's comments. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was appreciating the comments from my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie – thoughtful, measured, and very heartfelt, I thought – and I would appreciate the opportunity to hear him finish his thoughts.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. I can only relate what it was like growing up for me. As I've already shared in this House, my family came here, fleeing the violence in Chile, back in 1973. I remember what it was like to be made to feel like the "other." Now, I know that this isn't the majority of Canadians or even Albertans that discriminate against others.

I'll tell you that one of my first memories of being here in Canada – I wasn't even old enough to go to school yet – was being out on the front lawn of my house with my father and my older brother. We were raking up the leaves, and three young boys rode their bikes in front of our house. They remembered my brother, and they yelled at him: go home, you dirty Chilean.

Now, I'm not saying that the majority of Canadians are like this. That's not the intention of my words. What I am saying is that all it takes is one to leave that memory burned into your psyche. I haven't forgotten that day since. I was probably only three or four years old, something like that, but I remember that day. I am never going to forget that day.

That's exactly the kind of dehumanizing attitudes that we're trying to fight against. With this bill we're providing space for people to actually continue doing that same thing but just now in terms of sexual orientation. You're allowing it to happen by putting this bill forward. If you make this legislation, you'll continue to make sure that that kind of discrimination can continue to take place here in this province. That's what you're doing. I ask the government members: is this really what you're about? Is this really what you want to be about?

I can tell you that many constituents of mine are not very pleased with this, and I can only assume that there are constituents of your own that are not happy with this bill being put forward in the House. You're actually allowing this kind of discrimination to continue here in the province of Alberta by putting this bill forward. Even worse, not only are you making sure that the discrimination can continue, but then the people who actually feel that their

discrimination is warranted against people on sexual orientation feel that they can now act upon their discrimination, making it even worse.

I've already said it before, during my original statement. You're creating a situation where children will actually be in danger by putting this bill forward. So I'm really asking the government members to give this a sober second thought.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak to the amendment this evening? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to this amendment. As the amendment suggests, it is very important that we take the time to reflect on this bill and the consequences, I think largely unintended consequences – I hope they're unintended consequences – of this bill so that we can ensure that we do the right thing before we enact in a rushed way an ill-considered bill. I want to do that by talking a little bit about the fundamental nature of human rights and the attack on human rights that is implicit in this particular bill.

Now, I think it's important that we start with the notion that human rights are a fundamental part of western democracies. It's a major reason why our societies are better in many ways than many other places in the world where human rights are not noted, are not respected, are not protected within the laws and particularly within constitutional law. It's something that in the past this Legislature has been particularly proud about.

In fact, indeed, it was a Conservative government that brought in the Alberta human rights legislation. I remember members at the time talking about how proud they were to stand up in this House. I'm talking about Conservative members who were proud to stand up in this House and to talk about the fact that they wished to protect human rights, and I celebrate them for that. I think that was something that was well beyond the time it should have been done, and I'm very happy that the Conservative members of this House at the time chose to pursue that.

8:30

Now, within our human rights legislation we have over the last number of years arrived at the place where we have clearly said within the province of Alberta and, of course, within the country of Canada that the human rights of members of the gay, lesbian, and transgendered community are to be protected, that it is a fact within human rights that sexual orientation is an article and, therefore, is deserving of the human rights. That's the basis of our concern here today with regard to GSAs.

There's a second part that I think is fundamentally important. I'd like to just read a couple of short lines regarding the nature of human rights. These short lines are in reference to what is referred to as the hollow rights doctrine. I'll read the lines first, and then speak to them. "It is an important doctrine of constitutional law that constitutional rights once granted must not be minimized nor diminished to 'hollow rights'. They must, in all interpretations, be given a large, liberal interpretation." I will of course bring into the House copies of the article I just read from for people to see.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I also want to indicate that that article, called *The Guarantee of Catholic Education: The Doctrines of Hollow Rights and Permeation*, was written by a lawyer in Edmonton by the name of Kevin Feehan, who was subsequently put on the bench, Queen's Bench, and has just recently been elevated to the Court of Appeal,

so obviously a very well versed scholar in the area, actually quite well known for his teaching of constitutional law at the University of Alberta.

The reason I bring this in is that it's really important that we understand what's being said here, that once we have declared that human rights exist and that they are protected under constitutional law, we cannot minimize them or diminish them to hollow rights; that is, we cannot say that, yes, they exist but then act in a way to diminish the actual practice of those rights. We can't do that. And it's fundamentally important that we do that. Otherwise what happens is that minorities and people who are members of minority groups end up having their rights taken away from them.

Now, in this particular case he's speaking about the right of Catholic education in the province of Alberta. He's appeared in front of the Supreme Court on five occasions to protect the rights of Catholic education in the province of Alberta and has been successful on all five occasions. I think we have to hear what it is that we learned from these times spent in front of the Supreme Court of Canada; that is, we protect rights because we have a positive duty to protect the vulnerable, and we have to recognize their rights, and we have to act in such a way that the exercise of those rights is also protected.

What we're saying here is not simply that we identify that gay people have rights to their own sexual orientation, but we also must recognize that they have a right to the expression of their orientation and the protection of their expression. As soon as we start to put a knife into that, then we start to put a knife into all minority groups. Originally this was written about the minority group which was the Catholic school system here in the province of Alberta, but the same concept applies to other minority groups. You must be able to protect their rights as long as their rights, of course, do not infringe upon the well-being of other people. I respect that. There are limitations. We get that.

In this case what we're asking is that gay students have the right to gather together, to be in free association with each other, and to do so without that right being impinged upon by people who do not respect their rights. What we're doing here in this act is that we are essentially trying to say that while we respect the rights of the gay community, we are trying to suffocate the expression of those rights by not allowing them the opportunity to gather together in gay-straight alliances without threat of being outed. That's the concern.

The piece that I want you to reflect on is how much energy over the last 50 years has been put into protecting people's rights to association. If we look at America and we look at the McCarthy era, the whole point of their anti-Americanism doctrine was to out people who disagreed with the majority, and in outing them, of course, people lost their jobs and indeed lost their lives. We as a collective in North America and many other parts of the world quite rightly look back on those eras as terrible times in the protection of human rights. Now we are strongly against those un-American activities commission type of behaviours. Yet in this bill we have just instituted the possibility of exactly that same kind of oppression of a minority group occurring.

Now, we know that it's quite possible even within faith-based communities to meet the requirements of the present legislation that was put in by the former Minister of Education, now the MLA for Edmonton for Edmonton-North West, because it's been done by school boards all across the province. It's been done by faith-based school boards across the province, Catholic schools in Edmonton and Calgary, for example. So we know it's possible.

What we do know, then, is that we have 28 schools, and perhaps there will be others, because part of this act is to create more charter schools, more alternative schools, others who will come and say to

the government of Alberta: we know that you have instituted laws that protect human rights, but because we don't like them, we are not going to abide by them. Think about what it is that you're doing when you do that. You are actually supporting people to defy the laws of this province when their personal belief systems go against the underlying human rights notions that we have in western democracies. Now, that's a scary thing for you to be doing as legislators, to be saying that while you will put in laws, you will turn a blind eye to people who are defying those laws in a clear and direct way, standing up publicly and saying: we will not obey that law. When you begin to do that, then you begin to open the door for many, many other oppressions of minorities.

I've got to ask the Education minister: are they prepared to stand up in the House and say that they believe in human rights? Or are they saying that personal belief systems supersede human rights? I'd like to see the Education minister stand up and make a declaration on that. When people are making decisions to defy the human rights of others, will the Education minister have the fortitude to stand up and protect human rights? Or will the concern about gathering votes for the next election supersede the idea of the protection of human rights? It's very important that our legislators are very clear on this kind of thing.

I always want to go back and remind you that we have been through this before. In the United States when the southern states were told that the black people had the same rights as the white people, they tried to do the same thing. They tried to suffocate the actual enactment of the right by saying: yes; the rights are equal but different. In other words, black people could have schools but not go to white schools. That was the whole point of Brown versus – whoever it was. Now I've forgotten.

8:40

Mr. Eggen: The Board of Education.

Mr. Feehan: The Board of Education. Thank you.

Do you in fact believe that black people do not have the right to go to the same schools as white people? That's the question at hand. What we decided as democracies is that it is absurd to say that people have rights but they cannot enact those rights and that somehow some people's rights are diminished or devalued as compared to other people's rights.

Yet here we are in this place now suggesting that we are going to open a door, a large door now, to groups of people coming forward and doing the very things which civil rights people in America and many others in Canada have fought against, helping us to create a new modern democracy in which people's human rights are respected. That's the fundamental question underlying this act here. It's not simply finding some kind of nice little balance between these people's beliefs and those people's beliefs. You either believe in human rights or not.

If somebody came along – and I know I have to move into hyperbole sometimes; I've talked about this – and suggested doing something terrible to other people in society, would you stand up and say, "I'm against it"? If they were to suggest, for example, that they were going to physically harm other members of society, that they were going to hurt them, would you stand up and say, "You cannot do that"? Or would you say: "It's a balance. We'll let you harm a few, or you can harm them a little bit, or you can harm them only when they're in your neighbourhood or your school"? Would you put those limitations? Would you allow their rights to become hollow rights? Of course not. You wouldn't do that. If they were asking to do something that you yourselves recognized as absurd or hurtful or harmful, you would be the first to stand up and say that that is not acceptable. But here we are in a place where we're clearly

being told that the consequences of outing kids in schools who are part of the gay community is hurtful and harmful.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie standing to speak.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was so enthralled with the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford in terms of pinpointing specifically not only that people have these human rights but that they must be able to enact them, that they can live them. I think that's so important. I want to ask the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford if he could continue specifically on that, and why standing up to this bill is so important for him and his constituents.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. I appreciate the opportunity to just say a little bit more.

You've heard my argument around the fundamental human rights that are in danger by proceeding with this act and how it is contrary to the movement of societies and democratic societies for the last 50 years, everything that has happened from the great revolutions of the 1960s forward, where we started to understand and protect individual human rights, and they were actually brought into this Chamber by members of the Conservative Party at the time.

I want to add to that a second piece. Not only do we have a right to respect the laws of human rights and to ensure that they do not become hollow rights and that they're not diminished in any way in their enactment, but more than that, I think that when it comes to a question of rights and the moral imperative behind why we have rights in society, we actually have a positive duty. It's not simply a duty to not trample the rights of others. We have a positive duty, a duty that says that we must act on behalf of and protect and bring up and raise up those people who are most vulnerable. So it's not simply a matter of saying: we won't allow other people to harm you. We actually have the positive duty to ensure your well-being, and I think that's very important in terms of our work as legislators in this House.

We have a duty of protection for minorities because we have learned over the years that majorities have a tendency to diminish the rights of minorities, not always intentionally, but often, as we've seen in the last century or so or two centuries in the western world, sometimes majorities intentionally diminish the rights of minorities. You have to ask yourself: are you okay with that? Are you in a place where you've decided that as long as you've won the vote, as long as you're here with the majority, then other people don't matter? Is that the world in which you want to live? Is that the constitutional democracy that you want to support, or do you believe, as so many people have over the last few hundred years, that we actually bring society to a better place when we proactively recognize the rights of minorities and act to protect them so that they can express themselves, they can enact their rights in a way that they choose to do so?

Of course, on a very basic level of morality you want to make sure that majorities are not allowed to diminish the rights of minorities because someday you likely to be a minority in some way, perhaps the colour of your skin, perhaps the religion you choose to celebrate, perhaps the marriage you choose to enjoin will be viewed by others as outside the majority, as beyond the pale, as they would say in Ireland, in Dublin. So on a very basic level you want to protect minority rights because in some way or somehow you

yourselves will be members of a minority in one way or another, and you have to ask yourself . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, any other individuals looking to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre rising.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am always honoured to rise and speak in this place. Tonight as I stand to speak to this bill, I'm honoured to represent the voice of my constituents, but I guess I am also disappointed. I am disheartened. Indeed, there is a part of me that is disgusted at this legislation that I am speaking to here tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that I enjoy rhetoric. I enjoy making a good and grand speech. I enjoy from time to time indulging even in a bit of hyperbole and taking a bit of poking and fun, but tonight I am going to endeavour to speak honestly about my thoughts on this particular piece of legislation, in particular, on the portion of the legislation which has led us to dub this bill Bill Hate, and I do not use that word lightly. I truly believe that the foundation of the changes that this government is choosing to introduce in what is, frankly, an incredibly underhanded and disingenuous way is ultimately rooted in hatred. Now, that is not hatred that I ascribe to any particular member of this House though I am well aware – and, again, I'm saying this honestly – of at least at times the contempt in which some members of this House hold myself and my colleagues.

8:50

I sat in this House today as we had questions to the Minister of Education and some others about this particular bill, and those were passionate questions, Mr. Speaker, with all the same passion and verve that members of this government used to deliver some of their questions from this side of the House on things such as the carbon tax or other things on which they felt passion. I listened to a member of this government referring to us as a gang of thugs, a gang of truth twisters, a gang of bullies, and then again as a vicious gang. It is unfortunate the level of partisanship and vitriol, the amount of political gamesmanship, which, frankly, this Premier has chosen to apply to an issue of such import and which will have such effect on vulnerable youth in our province.

To be clear, Mr. Speaker, the roots of this discussion in this Legislature: it is a history of cowardice on the behalf of the government, on the behalf of the Conservative government of that time. When members of opposition brought forward a bill asking for the simplest of things for students who need peer support, who are in that vulnerable position, simply to have the ability to form a peer support group in their school, that government was afraid. They were afraid of members of their base that they felt would punish them, would grow angry. There were members of that government, indeed, themselves who were resistant to the idea for their particular moral or spiritual beliefs. When they saw that that bill was about to gain momentum and that there was no way they could hide from it, they tried to circumvent it. That was my predecessor, the former MLA for Edmonton-Centre, Ms Laurie Blakeman.

So they brought in their own bill, Bill 10, to try to circumvent and try to bring what they called balance. The Premier at the time, Mr. Jim Prentice, tried to frame Bill 10 as a balance between the rights of LGBTQ students and parents and school boards. The question at that time was really: what had to be balanced? Vulnerable youth simply wanting to create a club in their school where they could be safe: what was there to be afraid of? But that government was afraid, and they attempted to bring forward and attempted to move a bill in this House which was a sham, to try to

replace a bill that actually did something to support and protect those youth. Albertans would not have it.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, that was at that time a point of my own political activation, where I had begun to closely watch the politics of this province. I had watched the evolution of that particular government. I had watched the growth of arrogance. I had watched, frankly, what approached corruption, and then this.

What we had, Mr. Speaker, was that finally that government realized what this was going to cost them. They realized that they needed to do something if only to redeem their reputation, to save their electoral prospects, if not actually to do the morally right thing. So we had Bill 10. Yes, it was supported by all parties in this Legislature because it was a darn sight better than the garbage they had initially tried to push, and it was a significant step forward for the rights of LGBTQ youth in this province.

But as others have spoken before me, as the former Minister of Education, the Member for Edmonton-North West, laid out, it became clear that Bill 10 was designed with loopholes big enough to drive a semi-truck through, that it was all too easy and all too possible for any school, any administration that wanted to to simply put up obstruction after obstruction in the face of – let us remember again, Mr. Speaker – vulnerable youth. They were being forced to pit themselves against authorities without the tools to be able to fight back.

So our government took action. We closed those loopholes. We made sure that administration couldn't simply indefinitely delay the formation of a GSA or the appointment of a teacher to help with that GSA. We made it 100 per cent crystal clear what the rules were in terms of revealing a student's participation in a GSA, and teachers thanked us for that clarity.

As we brought forward that legislation and as we had that discussion, we saw the Premier, the then Leader of the Official Opposition, put out disingenuous argument after disingenuous argument, echoed by his members. Indeed, I remember the Member for Calgary-West standing in this House to move an amendment suggesting that GSAs were not, in fact, peer support groups but that they were a secret way for the government to attempt to smuggle in teaching on sexuality, that they were a secret way to smuggle in politics, the gay agenda, Mr. Speaker. That at heart is the paranoia, the conspiracy theory, the false belief that lies at the root of what this Premier, who I believe to be an intelligent enough man that I do not believe he truly believes that, though he has certainly made suggestions on the record about all sorts of other indoctrination that he does believe happens in public schools.

Frankly, we saw members of this House standing up and doing everything they could to misrepresent what a GSA was, I believe, to a certain extent simply for political gain, Mr. Speaker. We saw those same forces mobilize to support the now governing party. We see them revealed in individuals like Mr. John Carpay, who has been praised by his Premier and has had the most reprehensible views on the record, again promoting those same conspiracy theories and false ideas, polluting the public discourse around something that simply exists to support and protect vulnerable young people.

9:00

That brings us to where we are here today. We are debating this bill and we are looking at these changes so that the Premier, in my belief, can pay off a favour. Every member in this House that chooses to vote for this bill is choosing to support him in that work.

Mr. Speaker, I endeavour to hold every member of this House in respect and regard. I make every effort, despite the fact that I will proudly fly my party colours and I am proud of the caucus that I sit with, not to engage in cheap partisanship. It gets to me sometimes

in the heat of the moment. Sure, I've thrown a heckle or two. I try to honestly give every member in this House the benefit of the doubt in what they believe in and not to judge them for the decisions that they make, but I can tell you that there's no way around this for me. Any member in this House that votes for this bill that allows these provisions regarding gay-straight alliances in the province of Alberta to go forward, rolling back protections for students, exposing them, making it more difficult for them to access a simple safe space – I'm sorry – I will lose respect for that member. This is simply one line that for me I can't cross. This is my line in the sand.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, the number of people from the LGBTQ community that came to volunteer on my campaign, specifically stating their fear of this government and what it was going to do to GSAs, the fear of this Premier who indeed has been now called to account, and indeed the estimation even for some of his most Conservative friends dropped, like Mr. Charles Adler – this is shameful what this government is choosing to do. And members can rationalize it. They can try to say, "Well, it's just about finding balance. We just want to make sure that parents have their rights," but then, by all means, bring forward an amendment that principals must immediately grant a GSA when asked. That will not, in any way, abrogate any parents' rights or any individual's beliefs, but it will remove yet another obstacle from the path of young people who are struggling.

The Acting Speaker: Under 29(2)(a) I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday standing to speak.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments that the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has made, and I really appreciate all of the comments that have been made by all members of the Assembly here this evening from this side of the House.

I know that the member had the opportunity to stand with students at Victoria school in the not-so-distant past with a few other members. Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was there, a few others, I believe, as well, the leader of our team over here on the Official Opposition, possibly the Member for Edmonton-North West, or definitely the Member Edmonton-North West. But I'm just hoping to find out – I mean, we've heard from the Minister of Education that this bill is in response to people asking for balance and we really haven't heard a clear definition or we haven't been able to find out what that balance is, where that balance is coming from, or who is asking for it and why they felt so strongly the need to weaken the legislation that was already approved by this Assembly. In the member's conversations with the students at that school I'm just hoping to find out if you heard them looking for more balance, how they felt about the idea of weakening this legislation.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, it is simple enough for this government to demonstrate their goodwill. There are some simple amendments they could make to improve this legislation that would show that they in fact do care about these students, that they are not simply paying the bill for social conservative activists, like Mr. John Carpay and others, who out of a misguided sense of paranoia and conspiracy want to take away this opportunity for young LGBTQ youth. This government has that chance.

My colleague asked about the question of balance. Indeed, that is, I believe, likely the talking point that was handed to the Minister

of Education to move forward with. Again, I want to speak honestly tonight, and that is what I truly believe. Frankly, it is an incredibly poor one, Mr. Speaker. Of all of the individuals that I've spoken to from the LGBTQ community, youth who are currently in schools, who came through schools, who participated in a GSA, who wished they had a GSA, not one has come to me and said: "Gee, I wish there had been better balance. I wish somebody would have thought about how my school felt about the word 'gay'." None have come to me and said, "I'm awfully afraid that if I want to tell my parents that I'm part of the GSA, I'm not going to be able to do that." The minister claims she has had young people come to her and say, "We need better balance in how we have GSAs." I would look forward to seeing one of those young people stand with her at a press conference, as we had many young people stand at ours.

This bill is not about balance or at least not about achieving a balance. It's about removing balance. It's about tilting the scales backwards and against the very youth we are saying that we are here to help. That is the effect this bill will have. That is the message this government will send to the LGBTQ community, LGBTQ youth, and their allies in this province. This government and members that vote for this bill will wear that like a scarlet letter, and I, Mr. Speaker, will make sure that Albertans know. This bill deserves to be called Bill Hate.

Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

The Acting Speaker: I would just advise every member in the House that it's the current Speaker's opinion that given that the term was just used for the second time – the first time it seemed more considered. Long story short, the term Bill Hate is currently being reviewed. It's a decision that will be rendered by Speaker Cooper – I believe he mentioned tomorrow – and if that's the case, then I would advise members of this House to be wary about using that word as it could technically become unparliamentary in a past tense if spoken today. I would just mention that my current view of this going forward is that I think it would probably be advisable for individuals to refer to it, perhaps, as Bill 8 or something a little more measured given that it is currently being considered and a decision is coming soon.

Please continue.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At such time as the Speaker renders his ruling, I will be happy to follow. I would note that looking about this House, I see no disorder.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. I have seen disorder from that. In fact, the reason why I stood up when it was stated the second time was for that exact reason. I would just ask people to be measured with regard to using that term until a decision on it has been rendered.

9:10

Debate Continued

The Acting Speaker: Any other members looking to speak to RA1? I believe that the Member for Edmonton-West Henday is currently standing.

Mr. Carson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today on behalf of the constituents, well, hopefully, most of the constituents, of Edmonton-West Henday to speak to this motion to delay the passing of this legislation, recognizing that there is a complete lack of consultation that has been done on the bill that is before us. Of course, using the phrase that has been used several times in this House in regard to the name of this bill I understand is under review, whether it's right or not, but I would

say and I don't think that it's a stretch to say that this bill is mean spirited.

Now, I was so proud – one of the proudest days in my time as a Member of the Legislative Assembly was when the former minister, the MLA for Edmonton-North West, MLA for Edmonton-Calder at the time, put this bill before us. I had the opportunity to rise in this House and speak about the importance of this legislation to my constituents and to the people that I have met both in my time in high school, and even before that, but also in my time as a member of the Assembly and even through the friendships that I've built through this role.

You know, I've had volunteers come to me, and I shared a story of a volunteer that wanted their story to be told in this Assembly. When Bill 24 was before us, they asked that I speak to the fact that when they were in high school, they were discriminated against because of the way that they identified or the people that they chose to love. Being a member of the LGBTQ community negatively affected them because they didn't have something like a GSA in place at the time. They didn't have legislation to protect them. The story I shared went into some detail about the discrimination that they faced, about the sexual abuse that they faced by other students. I spoke about the fact that they had a home situation where their parents were not accepting of the way that they identified, and they had counsellors at school that did not understand how they identified. Even when they wanted to come out, even when they wanted somebody to talk to, there was no one for them to have these discussions with.

Now, I have concerns with the fact that over the last few weeks discussions of conversion therapy have been before us. The Minister of Health has said that they recognize the fact that conversion therapy discriminates against segments of our community, and that minister thinks it's wrong. Yet here we are debating a piece of legislation that is likely to push more people into situations like conversion therapy. Here, once again, we have other ministers, ministers that were happy to raise the pride flag – and I'm happy that they're willing to recognize sometimes the rights of the LGBTQ community. I'm sure that that's going to offend that member, but the fact is that they are going to stand with this government and they are going to support a piece of legislation that weakens the rights of the LGBTQ community, that weakens the responsibility and the role of educators to protect those students. So, no; I'm sorry. You don't get to be an ally if you don't stand with the community at every opportunity that you get. You don't get to be an ally if you're going to abstain from certain parts of the conversation because you had supporters or volunteers that got you here that you now owe something to. That's not acceptable.

Now, there are many flaws with this legislation before us. Of course, we've heard a great deal of conversation about how it's going to weaken GSAs. When Bill 24 was introduced, it was introduced recognizing that there were instances – many schools were already following these policies, and they were willing to support GSAs, gay-straight alliances. They were willing to recognize that this population was being discriminated against and that something needed to be done, but that wasn't the case in all schools or with all school boards, so something had to be done. We saw instances where, when requested, GSAs weren't being created and other instances where GSAs were trying to have meetings, and for whatever reason rooms were being booked over when they were trying to have meetings. Other times they were just told that they weren't allowed to.

It's very concerning for this piece of legislation to come before us and be touted as finding some balance. Really, I question the Education minister. I want to know where this balance is. I want to know who is telling them that something was wrong with the system. When I went to a local school in my community, I stood with the students at Michael Phair school. Now, it's not lost on me,

the symbolism of going to Michael Phair school and standing with them as they walked out against what they knew was coming in this piece of legislation.

Now, of course, other pieces of this legislation in regard to creating recall mechanisms for trustees are also very concerning. Just like any member of this Assembly, board members to local school boards are elected democratically, so I'm very concerned that we're going to start having conversations about being able to recall trustees, especially in an instance like this. If one of these trustees stands up against this harmful policy that this government is trying to implement, and the rest of the board stands with this government for whatever reason, there might be a concern of being recalled. That's very concerning to me. I think that people are elected democratically, and that vote should be recognized and respected.

Now, what is just as concerning is the fact that this government is leaving a bunch of the oversight in this legislation up to regulations. They're saying: "Don't worry. Trust us. We'll get it right after the fact. We can't tell you the details right now, but trust us." That's very concerning to me.

One of the main issues – and this is a discussion that we had in the 29th Legislative Assembly – is around school transportation. The 2.4-kilometre limit on being able to get your child access to transportation was a major concern to people in my community, people in Westview Village, the mobile-home community in Edmonton-Meadowlark at the time but Edmonton-West Henday now, that I have the honour of representing. They were concerned because they were being left out, and they were paying for yellow bus services. We were able to fix that, but now this piece of legislation that's before us is saying: "We'll figure it out after. In due course we'll figure that piece out."

And once again with the school fees. We worked very hard to reduce school fees. Once again: "In regulation. We'll figure it out." Well, when we have a budget that's not being presented until the fall, that's very concerning to hear the minister say: "Wait and see. Wait and see."

Now, we're seeing an underlying message coming from this government, whether it be with Bill 2, taking away pay from people under 18 years old, when we talk about the unwillingness of this government to stop conversion therapy from happening in this province, and with this bill before us talking about taking the rights of the LGBTQ community away from them. I'm very concerned with the direction of this government. I'm concerned that there is an effort or at least a perceived effort to attack kids. That is not your role as a government, to start taking rights, start taking pay away from youth in our province, and they are going to be very upset with you. Well, they already are.

9:20

I really don't know where this legislation is coming from. They were elected on economy, jobs, pipelines. They said that they were not going to focus on social issues; those were a distraction. Yet here we are in the first weeks of our first sitting, and they're taking the rights away from the LGBTQ community. They're taking pay away from young Albertans. It's very concerning that those are your top priorities.

Speaker's Ruling Relevance

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate – I truly hesitate – to interrupt the hon. member, but having taken a look at the amendment, RA1, that we're looking at right now, the idea here is Bill 8. This is the amendment itself.

Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that further time is necessary to enable school boards to adjust their policies to comply with the proposed legislation and regulations.

I just want to ensure that we stay within the realm of this, because there will be opportunity to discuss the bill. There will be ample opportunity for that. That way we might be able to just move towards that as well.

Debate Continued

Mr. Carson: Well, I appreciate that very much, Mr. Speaker, and I was getting to that point.

I think that it's important. I would argue that this legislation is rushed. I would argue that there has not been adequate time to consult with Albertans, which brings me back to the amendment. I think that there needs to be more time for school boards to work with this legislation. I think that there needs to be more time for teachers and school administrators to work with this. A lot of time and effort went into putting Bill 24 under scrutiny in terms of making sure that school boards were following the legislation to the T and respecting the law.

Now, the majority of elected school board trustees across the province were not around when the original Education Act was debated, so it's incredibly important that they have an opportunity to review what these changes mean to them and to their school boards.

Now, once again, Mr. Speaker, I want to just wrap back to the importance of consulting with everyone. You know, the opportunity that I had to go to local schools when we were first elected, I went with the then Minister of Education, once again the MLA for Edmonton-North West, to my high school, Jasper Place high school. They had a GSA at the time. They still do. Very inclusive, very supportive of the LGBTQ community, and I imagine that they were one of the earliest adopters of the legislation even before the legislation was in place. If we can get to a place where every school – I really don't understand why it's so hard to respect the rights of students.

When I had the opportunity to go to Jasper Place high school, when I had the opportunity to go to Michael Phair school, none of these students were saying that there was an imbalance of the legislation that was before them. So once again I would ask the Minister of Education – and I appreciate that that minister has been here to hear our concerns and take them into consideration. I really hope that the minister will support this amendment to delay this, to give school boards more opportunity to review this legislation.

I would also ask the other ministers that this legislation affects, as I said, the Minister of Health, the minister in charge of ensuring the end to conversion therapy, which they say that they support the end of – the minister of housing, who will have to house these vulnerable youth that, if they are outed by a school, God forbid, and they don't have a supportive relationship with their family or at least in the context of coming out to them, if they are pushed onto the street, what does that mean for the minister of housing? What does it mean for the minister of labour? I would appreciate it if we heard some more from ministers of this government on why they think that there needs to be a better balance here, why they didn't support the legislation in Bill 24, and why they think that this is strengthening opportunities for the LGBTQ community.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I think that members on this side of the House in the opposition have done a really good job of explaining why this legislation is not going to better the relationship between the LGBTQ community and school administrators or school board trustees. I think that they've done a good job of respecting the fact that this is a very sensitive situation, and while we always need to respect the rights of parents, it is just as important to respect the rights of the youth of our province.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West is ...

Mr. Eggen: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments from the hon. member. You know, it's kind of a trip down memory lane in a way, but these are important memories because it helps me to reconstruct both just how difficult it was to move and get Bill 24 on board, but how successful it was, right? Sometimes, you know, the best things in life are the most difficult to achieve, and this was one of those cases, for sure.

You know, the hon. member is in a unique situation compared to me, certainly. He could visit his old high school, which is Jasper Place high, with me ...

Mr. Carson: They'd think I'm a student.

Mr. Eggen: One of the teachers grabbed him and said: get back to class. No. That didn't happen.

... you know, within a period of a number of years and go back to that same place and see how things had changed over time, right? What I've heard from anecdotal evidence is that in schools that have strong GSAs and QSAs, the overall feeling of belonging and sort of safety and security is enhanced by the presence of a GSA. So it doesn't matter if the kids belong to it or not, but they know they can see that vulnerable kids that need help and need some safe sanctuary are being looked after and respected in the school, thus, by association, they can feel more respected and looked after in general, too. Maybe they're not part of a GSA or QSA, but they can see that: "Here we are. We're in a caring environment. This is happening around me, and I feel safe and secure by proxy." You know what I mean?

I'm just curious to know. You can remember, hon. member, us going to visit there. You probably went there a few other times, too, because you represented the area. How did you see the change and the development of a safe and caring school environment not just for the members of the GSA and the QSA, which are quite strong at Jasper Place, but for the whole school population? Let's not forget that Jasper Place high school has the largest school population in the entire province. It's like the size of a small town. It's, like, 3,000-some kids. That's a pretty good sample size to test this theory, that GSAs and QSAs don't just save lives of vulnerable LGBTQ-plus kids but also help to create a more safe and caring environment for everybody.

Could you help me with that?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-North West. I'm sure the member was asking that rhetorically because he spent a lot of time in schools as well. I'm very proud of the work that he did not only on this file but on all files, so I do thank him for that work.

You could definitely see a change. I mean, I will give a plug, actually. This year is my 10-year anniversary of graduating from high school in 2009. You know, I had the opportunity to see the change over the last 10 years. Even though while I was attending Jasper Place high school in 2009 – I was in grade 12 – and it was only a short period of time, as the conversation around supporting and protecting the LGBTQ community, you know, went on, you could see it reflected in the population of the school. As more people became allies to this population, it opened up the conversation for other people, too.

9:30

Overall, it just made people more inclusive and it made people respect that we all come from different places. We all have different values, to some extent. We should be free to love the people we want or to identify how we want. That's an important part of the conversation.

In this legislation – once again, it's incredibly important that we delay this, not only because of the repercussions of school boards and administrators not understanding what this legislation before them implicates but also the fact that it is turning back the clock. That is the exact opposite thing of what we should be doing. We need to show the province of Alberta that we are allies. If we are going to call ourselves allies, then we need to show it as well.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview standing; however, it is my understanding that because the amendment was moved by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview on behalf of Edmonton-Riverview, it counts as though you have already spoken to this amendment.

Do I see any others looking to speak to amendment RA1? Anyone? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As much as I have tried to, you know, go through notes and listen to my colleagues on this side of the House and also the members opposite, I really want to support the amendment that my colleague moved yesterday.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Looking at all this, to me it did not really show that we are going through a crisis or we are in a situation that we can call an emergency that this bill has to address, so this amendment, to me, is a very, very reasonable proposal. It would help not only the school board, to give them time to adjust to the policies, but I also think it will provide opportunity to the stakeholders to give more input. As this bill states, the stakeholders – one of the most affected communities are the students, the children – have not been consulted while preparing the bill. They're the ones who are going to feel the biggest effect after this bill is passed.

Generally speaking – I don't know – I even have some problems understanding what the heck we are trying to address through this bill. GSA, QSA: why are we so afraid of these two names? How do we interpret, like, that this is a GSA or friendship group? When we are moving forward, is this the kind of example that we're going to just set or the signal that we're going to give to our community and to our children, that they are not able to be friends with the people or their colleagues or their classmates in the school?

It seems like this is something the members opposite are really, really offended by, without coming up with real proof that GSAs and QSAs, you know – why are they so offended? What real danger do they have in reflecting to the school boards or schools or the democratic institution itself? They have provided protection to the most vulnerable children in school.

I think the government has a duty to serve the public, serve the society. The right to live, the right to be free from harm are their fundamental rights. They should have actually moved forward to protect the children. In this case, it seems like every single act they have proposed in this act is actually weakening the protections of the GSAs and QSAs.

The other thing I've seen proposed in this bill is, basically – I don't know – an attack on democratic institutions, you know, or I will call it more of an attack on public sectors, maybe, as it says that it's enhancing the ordered requirements for school boards and it has language respecting the prior rights of parents with respect to their

children's education and it creates recall mechanisms for trustees that were democratically elected members to the board.

On the contrary, it removed the cap on charter schools, so it changes the requirements for establishing charter schools and extends rules on the fees of charter schools. And my colleagues, you know, mentioned how it's going to affect the children's ability to access the buses to school given that the changes were made so the students can, you know, qualify for the school buses and some of the moves the prior government has made to make education more affordable by eliminating the fees.

It didn't really seem like kind of the challenges and emergencies, basically, we are facing in this province that the urgency of this government is – seeing that they want to pass this bill right away when my colleagues just didn't really ask that. They asked to give it more time so that it will provide opportunity to stakeholders, the parents and teachers, to participate in the consultation process.

I really, you know, want to support the amendment as it reads on this.

Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that further time is necessary to enable school boards to adjust their policies to comply with the proposed legislation and regulations.

I really wanted to actually support this amendment, and I ask my colleagues and the members of this House to please support this amendment. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Certainly, you know, I concur with the comments from my colleague here. You know, the amendment speaks to, really, the rushed way in which the UCP government is ramming this bill through. Having sober thought, a good consultation, things that he spoke of: I mean, that is just so important to us making sure that we have legislation – education is a very important area that we as the provincial government are responsible for and, of course, making sure that human rights are upheld in our province. That's also significant and important. I mean, there is much to be reviewed if, you know, just with one fell swoop this UCP government is now going to not make GSAs mandatory.

9:40

It's very important because we know that GSAs make a big difference not only for students in the LGBTQ community but also students who are just of the regular population. I know that the hon. member is concerned about people being treated well, so we want to make sure that all students are. So students who are part of a GSA – not only does it reduce suicide for LGBTQ students but also all students. Specifically, this research study that I was looking at that needs to be part of the consultation process says that, you know, male students who are heterosexual are also very much impacted by that. It makes a difference for them because it's a more inclusive environment. All are welcome. All people's human rights are upheld. It's just such a fundamental right in our society.

It's really a travesty what's going on here in this Legislature. You know, on this side of the House we're very proud of the work that we did on this issue. We know it saves lives, not only LGBTQ students but all students. I just thank the member very much for his contributions, and I just want to give him an opportunity to say a few more words.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

Mr. Deol: Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to give me time to elaborate on what I was trying to say on this. You know, my biggest challenge: I am also refraining from saying something and trying to find the parliamentary language when I'm trying to express my views on anything I have to rise and say and give my views on in the House. Bill 8, I'll say this, is – I don't know. It's very hard for me to understand, basically. It's an attack on fundamental rights, and we say I don't know what kind of...

Ms Sigurdson: Do you want to read the study?

Mr. Deol: I can read this. I'm proud to be in the NDP caucus and working with my colleagues on this side of the House. This is not something, how would I say, if I get friends with my opposite members, Member for Calgary-McCall, on those days when we were discussing. And what we are afraid of in GSAs when it says: how do you interpret it? That's the biggest thing that's bothering me. Going forward in the 21st century it's right to mingle around, talk to your friend, and defend your friend in case of somebody's bullying after you see that your friend is in danger if you want to enjoy your time together. To address this issue – I don't know why this became so prevalent an issue for this government.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton...

Mr. Dang: South.

The Deputy Speaker: South West.

Mr. Dang: South. Just south.

The Deputy Speaker: Just south?

Mr. Dang: Just south. No west this time. It's okay, Madam Speaker. It's getting a little bit late in the night tonight. I'm always pleased to rise and speak no matter how you name me.

Madam Speaker, it is really a great pleasure to be here tonight with the rest of my colleagues in the Assembly to speak to Bill 8, or perhaps Bill Hate, which really is something that is so unique in...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, we're on the amendment.

Mr. Dang: Sorry. On the reasoned amendment to Bill Hate.

It is really something that I think is so important that we really do take a deep dive into in this Assembly. The amendment makes it very clear that we do need to have more time available to school boards to make sure their policies are going to be able to comply with the proposed legislation and the regulations, that I'm sure will be forthcoming from the minister.

I think that this is important because we can look at, really, the lack of consultation that happened, and we can see that we saw different school boards across the entire province come out and say, "Well, yes, there are good things that the government decided to do in terms of changing some of the numbers around here and there," but it would have been nice if they'd gotten a phone call to let them know it was coming. We heard that from the Alberta School Boards Association, we heard that from a number of the major boards in this province as well, and I think it's very clear the government didn't do their homework.

I think this has become a recurring theme in this Assembly, Madam Speaker. I think it's becoming a common sight that the government really doesn't put in the work required to make sure their bills are ready to go, to make sure that their bills are well

thought out, to make sure their bills are written properly, and to make sure that all the relevant stakeholders have been consulted. This is something that we've seen time and time again.

I really do want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview for bringing forward this amendment, because I think it's something that's very important. Legislators have a duty to make sure that our legislation will work for the people it affects. I believe school boards and families are the people that this will affect, and none of those people were consulted when the government brought this forward.

I mean, really, clearly, we can see that the protections that Bill 8 would take away from vulnerable Albertans and vulnerable youth are quite substantial, and I think it speaks so clearly to how little the government either went out to seek advice or perhaps how little they listened. But, really, there needs to be more time to make sure that these policies and adjustments are possible. What is going to happen is that we are going to have some significantly weakened legislation that really does not protect gay-straight alliances or queer-straight alliances in this province, and that's something where we need to take a step back and let school boards understand the ramifications and let families understand the ramifications and let vulnerable youth understand the ramifications, Madam Speaker.

When we look at the bill and we look at how significantly this legislation will roll back the protections for the students, when we look at how significantly this will weaken them and how far behind other jurisdictions in Canada this will put us, it is something that is very concerning for all members of the opposition here and, I hope, for members of the government as well, that they would be concerned that this puts us behind the pack in protecting gay kids.

Madam Speaker, it's very important today that I use the word "gay" and the word "queer" because they are words, I believe, that are essential to the identity of so many Albertans that this legislation ostensibly is supposed to protect. Bill Hate: what it actually does is that it rolls back those protections.

We know that the Minister of Education took many days before she was comfortable enough to say those words. I'm here to reassure her that those words will not in fact affect her in any way. She should feel comfortable using those words, and perhaps the Premier should feel comfortable using those words as well. Gay-straight alliances and queer-straight alliances matter, and consultation with school boards needs to be done to ensure that we get them right. If the minister felt that it wasn't important enough to consult on this issue or that students didn't matter enough to be consulted on this issue or that vulnerable Albertans really didn't need to have a say, that gay kids themselves didn't need to have a say, then that's the minister's prerogative, Madam Speaker, but I really think that that's something we should all be concerned about in this Assembly. It's something that we shouldn't encourage in this Assembly.

That's why this amendment is so important, because it allows us to slow down and re-evaluate the implications of this. The implications of rushing through this legislation and this dangerous ideology will hurt LGBTQ2S-plus youth all across this province and all across the education system. Really, this act to destroy gay-straight alliances is something that we really shouldn't condone, so we really should be spending that time to make sure that we understand what it actually does and that school boards have the opportunity to understand what it actually does.

9:50

When the minister spoke about how this bill was introduced almost a decade ago now, she spoke about how timely it was because it was almost a decade old. Madam Speaker, I was still in primary school when this bill was first introduced in this Assembly. I think I've come a long way since then, but I think that certainly

the people that were consulted then perhaps aren't around now, and the people that were involved in GSAs back then perhaps are now lobbying to make sure we can get more GSAs put into this province and perhaps fighting against this very bill. I think it's very important that we have these conversations today in this Assembly. I think it's very important that we look at this bill and say that this reasoned amendment makes sense. It's something that we should move forward with. We should slow down this bill, and we should look what the actual implications are.

Gay kids matter, and that's one of the reasons that we're here, to stand up for all Albertans. It doesn't matter whether they're gay. It doesn't matter whether they're queer. I hope every single member of this Assembly will get up and at least say those words. I know it will make some members uncomfortable to say those words, but, Madam Speaker, I think it's important that they're recorded in *Hansard* here today. We know as the Official Opposition and I hope all legislators in this Assembly know that these are the people that we're trying to fight for. These are the people that this bill needs to protect, and it doesn't do that job. It doesn't do the job of protecting vulnerable youth, and that is something that is very concerning. That's why we need to slow down and take the further time that's necessary to enable boards to adjust to and comply with this legislation.

But, really, Madam Speaker, Bill Hate does not allow any of this to happen. Bill Hate puts us behind the pack. It puts us, in fact, well behind many other provinces' legislation, and that's something that we should not be standing for here in Alberta. We should not be standing here and letting gay kids down. We should not be standing here and watching our students across this entire province having to walk out of their classrooms to protest this minister's risky, ideological, and dangerous policies. That's something that's very concerning.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I know the Premier thinks that students shouldn't be politicking on their time, but students understand – perhaps they understand even more than this minister understands – how detrimental this bill will be, how detrimental and how dangerous this bill will be. I think it's something that we should be very concerned about. If students are concerned about it, then the Education minister should be concerned about it because the Education minister's job is indeed to ensure that these students have the best possible and safest learning environments, and the GSA legislation that's being brought in in Bill 8 really does not do that job. It really lets every single student down. It certainly lets every single gay student down and every single queer student down, and that's something that the minister should be concerned about. It's the minister's job and the minister's duty to protect these students and ensure they have a good education. It is the minister's job to ensure that.

This amendment allows us to go back and look at why the minister is failing to do that job, Mr. Speaker, because very clearly the minister has failed. The minister has absolutely failed to help protect GSAs in this province. When we look at this legislation, we can see very clearly that students across this province are outraged. They are standing up against this government, and they do not believe in the risky, ideological decisions of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I think, very clearly, this amendment absolutely needs to be passed. This is the right amendment at this time to move forward. It allows us to have a strong framework to begin figuring out how we can protect gay kids in the future, and that's why I'm going to encourage all members of this Assembly to vote for that amendment.

I'd also like to move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Motions

The Speaker: I see the hon. Government House Leader is rising to ask for unanimous consent.

Mr. Jason Nixon: That is correct, Mr. Speaker. I request unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 39(1) to move a motion to rescind Government Motion 14, agreed to on June 11, 2019.

The Speaker: Hon. members, it is important that we listen closely to the direction of the Speaker over the next few minutes or so. I will ask only one question. Is anyone opposed to granting unanimous consent?

[Unanimous consent granted]

17. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly rescind its approval of Government Motion 14, agreed to on June 11, 2019.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Government House Leader has moved a motion. This is a debatable motion. If anyone has any reason to debate, please feel free to do so now.

[Government Motion 17 carried]

The Speaker: I see that the hon. Government House Leader is rising, perhaps to move unanimous consent.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, you are correct, Mr. Speaker. I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I request unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 39(1) to move a motion to rescind Government Motion 15, agreed to on June 11, 2019.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader is rising to move a motion.

18. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly rescind its approval of Government Motion 15, agreed to on June 11, 2019.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Government House Leader has moved a motion to rescind Government Motion 15, agreed to

on June 11, 2019. This is a debatable motion. Anyone wishing to add to the debate?

[Government Motion 18 carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader I believe is rising to ask for unanimous consent.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to revert to Notices of Motions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that, I will move the following motion:

Be it resolved that the message from Her Honour the Administrator, the 2019-20 interim supply estimates, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

The Speaker: Thank you for providing notice to the Assembly.

The hon. Government House Leader would like to move oral notice of perhaps Government Motion 20.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, I'm glad we're on the same page, Mr. Speaker. That's always helpful. I will move the following motion, that I just provided oral notice for, which is:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) the Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the 2019-20 interim supply estimates for three hours on Tuesday, June 18, 2019.

The Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, I feel like perhaps we've made some good progress in the last few minutes. Do you have any other motions that you might like to move?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are on a roll, so with that, first of all, pursuant to Standing Order 3(1.2) I will advise the Assembly that there shall be no morning sittings for the following days: Thursday, June 13, 2019; Tuesday, June 18, 2019; Wednesday, June 19, 2019; and Thursday, June 20, 2019.

With that, I will move to adjourn the Assembly until tomorrow, Thursday, June 13, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 9:59 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Government Bills and Orders

 Second Reading

 Bill 8 Education Amendment Act, 2019..... 781

Government Motions..... 795

Notices of Motions 795

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